

The Magic Christmas in Lights event at Bellingrath Gardens is a spectacular show every year, but this season's 25th anniversary presentation is even bigger, with three million lights and 16 different scenes.



# Christmas in Lights even bigger this season at Bellingrath Gardens

SUBMITTED SPECIAL TO THE CALL NEWS

One of the nation's best holiday light shows is right here in south Alabama. Bellingrath Gardens and Home regularly host a spectacular display of holiday lights that add to the Christmas spirit but this year an even bigger and better display will be offered as Bellingrath Gardens and Home presents the 25th Anniversary Season of Magic Christmas in Lights in 2020.

This year's dazzling nighttime display features more than 1,100 set pieces, three million lights and 16 different scenes, all are designed as part of a walking tour throughout the 65-acre Bellingrath Garden estate. In honor of this year's milestone, a new scene has been created in honor of the 25th Anniversary Season.

The following are details of the show along with details of dates:

■ **Opening Night** is Friday, Nov. 27. Following the opening night, shows will continue nightly through Jan. 3, 2021, rain or shine.

■ **A Gulf Coast tradition:** Magic Christmas in Lights has become a must-see tradition for visitors from the Gulf Coast region and beyond. Families can enjoy strolling along the paths together, taking holiday photos, drinking cocoa on Live Oak Plaza, visiting Santa Claus and shopping in the Bellingrath Gift Shop.

■ **Made in Alabama:** Many of our guests do not realize that Magic Christmas in Lights is a made-in-Alabama attraction. Each year, the set pieces for the holiday lights are designed, welded, painted and lamped on site by members of Bellingrath's staff. Three employees work full-time all year on the light display.

■ **Awards:** USA Today readers have voted Magic Christmas in Lights into the publication's Readers' Choice holiday light display contest on multiple occasions. The display is currently nominated in USA Today's top 10 list of "Best Botanical Garden Holiday Light Displays in America." (To vote, click here.) The Southeast Tourism Society selected Magic Christmas in Lights as a Top 20 Festival & Event winner for November 2020. The display was also selected to the American Bus Association's "Top 100 Events of 2016."

■ **Music and historic tours:** Magic Christmas in Lights also includes choral performances on the Great Lawn on weeknights during the first three weeks of the season. In addition, the historic Bellingrath Home, decorated in full holiday finery, will be open for guided tours each night until 8 p.m. The Home, built in 1935, features the Bellingraths' original antique furniture and collections.

■ **Santa and shopping:** Guests may also have safe, socially distanced photos taken with Santa Claus in the newly

created "Santaland" in the Entrance Building from 5:30 to 9 p.m. through Dec. 23. Guests are sure to find that perfect holiday gift in our fully stocked Gift Shop, open until 9 p.m. nightly.

■ **Festive food:** Snacks and hot cocoa are available for purchase at the midway point of the tour on Live Oak Plaza. Adult beverages are available on Live Oak Plaza and in the Magnolia Café. The Magnolia Café will have extended hours, 4 to 8 p.m., during the season; menus are posted on [bellingrath.org](http://bellingrath.org).

■ **Plan your visit:** For details about Magic Christmas in Lights, or to order tickets, visit [bellingrath.org](http://bellingrath.org). (The Gardens will be closed on Christmas and New Year's Days.) Please note that online tickets are sold for specific dates and appointment times in keeping with precautions related to Covid-19. These appointment times do not limit our guests to their time in the Gardens; the times are only to ensure crowd control.

Bellingrath Gardens and Home is operated by the Bellingrath Gardens and Home Foundation, a charitable, not-for-profit organization. Bellingrath Gardens and Home is dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the 65-acre garden and estate home of Walter and Bessie Bellingrath. For more information, visit [bellingrath.org](http://bellingrath.org) or call 251-973-2217.

# State offering \$500 incentive to find new guardsmen

*Soldiers, airmen, retirees asked to help locate recruits*

SUBMITTED SPECIAL TO THE CALL NEWS

MONTGOMERY — Gov. Kay Ivey on Friday via Executive Order 723 announced the creation of the Alabama National Guard Joint Enlistment Enhancement Program (JEEP) in hopes of enlisting new guardsman through an incentivized recruiting program. JEEP will provide a monetary incentive of \$500 to soldiers, airmen, and retirees who can provide a lead to recruiters that results in enlistment.

"The Alabama National Guard routinely responds to crises and emergencies, both here at home and across the country," Ivey said. "With the increasing demands on them, which has been evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, we must be innovative in acknowledging the hard work of our Guardsmen in recruiting new members. I hope JEEP is one example of how Alabama expresses our debt of gratitude to the individuals within the Alabama National Guard."

Current soldiers, airmen, and retirees will function as assistants to potential Guard recruits, who will be expected to guide, motivate, and encourage recruits all the way up to the point of enlistment. All current members of the Alabama National Guard holding the pay grade of O-3 and below, can participate in JEEP. Retirees of any rank who have served in the Alabama National Guard can also participate.

"I'm excited about the future of the Joint Enlistment Enhancement Program, and the impact this program will have on continuing to ensure the Alabama National Guard is manned and ready to perform at the highest levels for all missions," Maj. Gen. Sheryl Gordon, the adjutant general of the Alabama National Guard said. "This partnership, between the State of Alabama and the Alabama National Guard, incentivizes our best recruiting assistants, who are our current and retired Alabama National Guard soldiers and airmen, for enlisting the high-quality individuals we need to maintain a quality force."

The costs associated with this program will be funded from the existing budget allocations made to the State Military Department.

*'Tis the season*

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MAGIC CHRISTMAS IN LIGHTS

25 YEARS

Special Events for the 25th Anniversary Season:  
SANTALAND, nightly in the Entrance Building through December 23  
HOLIDAY CONCERTS on weeknights on the Great Lawn  
*View the full holiday concert schedule on [bellingrath.org](http://bellingrath.org)*

Advance tickets available online and at the Gardens.  
NOVEMBER 27 – JANUARY 3  
Open nightly, rain or shine!

**Bellingrath**  
Gardens and Home

12401 Bellingrath Gardens Road • Theodore, AL 36582  
251.973.2217 • [bellingrath.org](http://bellingrath.org)

*Closed Christmas and New Year's Days*